Bill and Bella

By JANE OSBORN

Twelve-year-old Bill Burton kicked the large whitewashed stone that marked one side of the driveway that led into the Mapes farmhouse, and his cousin, a decade older, looking a little sheepish and decidedly uncomfortable in stiff starched collar on the warm vacation day, patted the boy on the back.

"I didn't know—how could I know?" he said. "Things like that a fellow doesn't plan to have happen. I hadn't even seen Bella, had I?"

"No, but if I'd a known you were going to get girl-crazy and get engaged and everything, why I'd told my mother and father, I would, not to let you spend your vacation here, 'stead of telling them I'd share my room and everything.

"I thought you'd want to go fishing, like you said you would and everything, and here after only a week you do a thing like this. Well, go on, smarty; I guess I can get along without you. Only, anyway, I think you might of let a fellow know that you were going to do it, 'stead o' springing it on him after I'd been digging bait and making the springboard in the pool and everything."

The truth was that Bill Burton, once the idol of his young cousin, Steve Miller, after having arranged to spend his month's vacation at the Miller farm, where for several seasons he had shared the boyish pastimes of his cousin, had become first smitten with and then engaged to Bella Mapes, the blue-eyed daughter of a neighbor farmer of the Millers. On the day in

"But I'm Not Very Good Looking."

question he had made a clean breast of the case to his youthful cousin and explained that as he had accepted an invitation to spend the afternoon and take tea with the lovely Bella he could not go fishing with his small cousin, as that young man had expected he would.

So they parted at the white stone that marked the driveway of the Mapes farm that summer day a dozen years ago, and after trying to find sport in fishing alone and making numerous resolutions never to "get silly about a girl," young Steve entered the Mapes farm by a back way and found a shady place beneath a lilac bush, where he might nurse his resentment in the vicinity of his cousin's undoing and possibly make observations of the charming Bella. It was all entirely inconceivable to him that any young man, least of all his cousin, Bill Burton, could find more satisfaction in the society of any girl than in himself. There was certainly nothing underhanded in sitting quietly under the lilac bush and watching Bill and Bella if they passed, especially as he would never divulge to anyone whatever he might see or hear.

He might have observed that Bella's blue eyes shone with unwonted happiness and that she was decked out in her crispiest white frock. But Steve couldn't see that Bella looked at all different than usual and it was inconceivable to him that Bill was greatly enjoying himself. Then he overheard this:

"But you really are the dearest, best man in all the world—really you are, and I ought to know, because I have brothers and cousins and I've always known lots of boys. And you are, oh, so good-looking, Bill. Truly you are. I never cared about a man's being so awfully tall if he was only well built; and you are awfully well built, Bill. Why, Napoleon was lots shorter than you are and Alexander Hamilton wasn't a bit taller. It isn't as if I was a great tall girl."

Steve listened more intently. Somehow this kind of talk interested him. It threw side-lights on this matter of courtship that he had never dreamed of. There was a lot of talk in between and then he listened again.

"I know you are going to make a great success, Bill. Men with foreheads shaped like yours always do if they are started out right. And you are started out right because your hand shows that you have a splendid talent for business. I just know you are going to make a great success. Oh, I am so proud of my Billy. He's just the dearest, best, bravest man in the world."

At the next opportunity Steve crept out of the lilac bush and made tracks for home. Later he confessed to Bill what he had heard.

"I see now why you wanted to go and get engaged," he said. "I didn't know that was what it was like before—'cause, of course, no one but your girl would ever tell you all those things. Geo, but she thinks you are just perfect, don't she, Bill? I don't suppose she ever noticed those freckles on your nose."

So it was that the elder cousin gave the younger what he regarded as a sound sage piece of advice. "There are girls," he told him, "who will want you to do all the flattering, all the kidding. They may be the most fascinating kind. But they don't make the best sweethearts and wives. They expect too much and instead of helping a fellow up the road to success they just hinder him. That's why I fell for Bella. I suppose I might have met lots of girls that were prettier and all that, but I figured that Bella appreciated me and that that was what would help me to success."

Steve grew to manhood and Bill and Bella were married, and moved far away to the West, and though the two cousins did not see each other for many years, Steve always remembered the good advice that Bill had given to him. He had been his boyish ideal and somehow though he never saw him, he imagined that he was still in his business and family life out there in the West living up to this ideal.

There were girls aplenty. There was Ruth of the Titian hair and the perpetual bantering laugh, and there was Matty, blonde, with drooping eyelashes and imperious manner, and there were Daisy and Sally and Vivian and Gertrude—perhaps others. It may be that Steve was engaged to some of them, but never once did they compare Steve, who was cast in the same proportions as Cousin Bill, to the great Napoleon or Hamilton, never did they tell him that he was the dearest man in the world, the best and the bravest, though somehow they managed to exact from him numerous protestations as to their angelic and seraphic qualities. Steve had just decided that the girls like Bella were girls of the past, that the girls of his generation were not of the doting kind.

Still, he remembered Bill's advice and Bill was still in the back of his mind, his "beau ideal."

Then Steve got a little stenographer who was fresh from the country where she had taken a correspondence course. And she had nice blue eyes and hair as straight as Providence had made it and—well, Steve had her in his employ for a month before he ever thought of her as a possible Bella. Then one day absolutely sans coquetry, sans calculation this little Flora Graves said: "Mr. Miller, I never knew a man with such a good business head in my life, and I've seen a good many men, because I used to watch the customers in my uncle's hardware store where I kept the books. I'm sure you're going to make a great business man.

Bill looked up. He noticed that the girl's eyes were of a pretty blue and that they were round.

"But I'm not very good looking," he suggested, and Flora surprised but still sans coquetry answered: "Well, you're not so very tall, but you're well built. Napoleon was small and yet he had ability. You've got a better shaped head than Napoleon."

There was little delay, and on their wedding trip they went to the western town where lived Bill and Bella. It was to be a surprise—Steve liked surprises—and they chanced to arrive in the town on the same train that Bill and Bella were taking from a little shopping trip to the nearest town. They were behind Bill and Bella.

"But do you think this hat is becoming?" asked Bella, who was no longer quite so lithe as she had been a dozen years ago.

"Perfectly charming, my dear," said Bill, wearily. "You are charming in everything. I often say that with a wife as handsome as you—"

"That was rather poor pie we had for dinner at the hotel," interrupted Bella. "I noticed you ate yours fast enough. I hope you didn't like it better than mine—"

"It wasn't a patch to yours," was the tired reply. "You are the best cook in the world. I have often told you that I had a great deal more than most men to be thankful for. I hope you know I appreciate—"

Steve and Flora just stayed right on that train when Bill and Bella got off, and when they got off at the next stop they turned around and went back again. Steve told Flora he had changed his mind about stopping off there; that he had important business to attend to and a week later when they took their belated honeymoon they went far from Bill and Bella.

Doctor Johnson in Paris.

Turn back a century and a half and you will see, strolling along the garden walks at Versailles, Doctor Johnson. He did not consider that Paris seen in a hurry lent itself so easily to remark as the Hebrides, and his impressions of Versailles he left unrecorded. If Doctor Johnson did not find much to say on the subject of Paris, Paris had some remarks to make about Johnson. His appearance, "his figure and manner," quite astonished them. He insisted on wearing "brown clothes, black stockings, and plain shirt," and on speaking Latin to all and sundry, because, Boswell explains, it was a maxim with him that a man should not let himself down by speaking a tongue brokenly.

A BIT OF HOME WITHIN THE CAMP

A long, low building of frame construction, attractively planned, with wide verandas and a homelike aspect. Outside are hanging the flags—the Stars and Stripes, which must soon be taken in as it is nearly sunset, and another flag bearing a little triangle of blue and the letters Y. W. C. A. It is a fall afternoon and the air is a bit sharp. Through the front windows of the house the woman approaching up the walk can see the cheerful glow of an open fireplace. There is the sound of a piano and some one is singing.

The woman, who is slight and young and tired-looking, puts her heavy suitcase down on the walk and shifts the baby she is carrying to the other arm. She listens a minute, then picks up the luggage and walks bravely up to the front door. Some one has heard her coming and is there to meet her. Some one always is in places like this. The door is thrown open and a kind woman's voice says: "Oh, do come in and rest. Let me take the baby." The baby is passed over and the stranger, worn from a long journey, tired and sad, is given the welcome which only the Y. W. C. A. hostesses know how to give.

She explains that she has come to see John before he leaves for the front. She has been saving her money for traveling expenses, and has come to surprise him. John has never seen the baby, and now maybe he never will, for she has discovered that John has just left on a two days' furlough to surprise her. Before she could get a train back to her home John's furlough will have expired and he will be on his way back to camp. The little mother does not know how to meet the situation and tears of fatigue and disappointment begin to flow.

"Well, that's too bad," says the sympathetic Y. W. C. A. worker. "But cheer up. You can just stay here for a couple of days. We'll send a wire to John at the first place his train stops and tell him to take the next train back. He can enjoy his furlough here."

This is done and the little family has a glorious day of it.

The Young Women's Christian association has established 92 hostess houses of this character for American soldiers and sailors and their families. In this brief bulletin of news lies one of the most potent factors in the winning of this war. Our boys are fighting for their homes. The Y. W. C. A. with its hostess work in this country and in France is helping to keep the ideal of American home life constantly before the men who are protecting it. These men had to go away from their individual homes, but there is a home which follows them—a place where they can go when they are off duty and meet their families and rest. There is a room in every Y. W. C. A. hostess house with a real fireplace in it and a domestic hearth. There are chairs with cushions on them; the china is not of the iron-bound bucket variety necessary in camps; and best of all, the boys say, there are nice women to talk to. No boy in camp would hesitate to ask his mother or sister or the girl he thinks most of to meet him at a Y. W. C. A. house, for he knows that the women she will see there are of the right kind. The very fact that it is known that there is a real, homey place near each camp authorized by the war department and presided over by dignified and refined women, has served very largely to discourage the other type of woman and keep her away from the men she formerly preyed upon.

The Y. W. C. A. houses are not established with any view to marking class lines, however, although many of the hostesses who assist led lives of greatest ease and luxury before the war. Democracy rules at the sign of the little Blue Triangle.

A story is told of a great merchant's wife whose individual fortune mounts to the million mark. This lady is a member of one of the Y. W. C. A. committees, and on one occasion she was helping in the cafeteria of a hostess house at the Great Lakes naval training station. A little shopgirl who had a "day off" from her work in the basement of the great store owned by the Y. W. C. A. worker's husband, and who had come to see her sailor brother, was in a State street hurry for service. She sharply ordered the merchant's wife to "look alive with these forks, girlie."

The lady addressed as "girlie" quite humbly saw to it that the pile of forks was replenished. Then she went over and talked to the girl, helped her to locate her brother and sent her away happy. The shopgirl never knew that she had been talking to her employer's wife.

There are two hostess houses at the Great Lakes station, and it is a wonderful sight to see the crowds of women relatives and friends of the sailors who throng to them on the Wednesday drill afternoons. From 1,000 to 3,000 persons a day are cared for in the cafeterias, and the nurseries are full of sailor babies, whose mothers can leave them there safely while they are on the grounds.

In addition to the hostess house work in this country the Y. W. C. A. has established the famous Hotel Petrograd in Paris as a center for transient women war workers overseas. There are also many foyers or recreation centers in France where girl munitions workers, signal corps girls and others are refreshed and brightened by association with the play leaders of the Y. W. C. A. who have introduced American gymnasium classes into French life.

Worth Seeing.

We don't know much about this circus that's coming, but we hope it's the one Pat attended not long ago. "There was wan fellow," he said, "that beat all the rest. Sure, he balances a ladder on his nose, climbs up to the top and pulls the ladder up after him."—Boston Transcript.

Dumas Phenomenal Writer.

The elder Dumas, in one phenomenal year, actually turned out volume at the rate of one a week.